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S.T.A.R.T. Exchange Vol. 02, No. 01

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START *Exchange*

A NEWSLETTER FOR S.T.A.R.T. COMMUNITIES

Vol. 2, No. 1
Spring 1991

Oxford "Goes Bananas" Over Economic Drought

By most observations, Oxford's future was bleak. The bank had closed; doctors had left the hospital, and the cheese plant, the town's major employer, had burned down.

But townspeople had a vision. Oxford's Rotary Club adopted the S.T.A.R.T. program for economic development. Rotarian **John Vondracek** was named as chair of the project and "a lot of hard workers cooperated," in Vondracek's words.

"We were in an economic drought a couple of years ago," Vondracek points out, "yet we have a town that right now is as vibrant as it has been in a long time."

The turn-around can be attributed to new industry, a new recreation center and a new park, all made possible by a community working together, plus plans that include a new theater and adaptation of the hospital building.

A new hog operation is underway. Sands Livestock, an international firm operating out of Columbus, was attracted to Oxford by a news release. In addition to Oxford, Sands plans to locate in Edison and Arapahoe, helping this three-community colony boost construction, employment and property values.

Mid-America Farms bought and rebuilt the remains of the Oxford cheese plant and is "doing great with a couple of shifts." A second hand store is making a strong beginning.

A clinic, with a full-time Physicians Assistant and visiting doctors from Cambridge, operates out of part of the hospital building, and the remainder is being renovated to provide rental income, an important consideration for

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Standing in front of the Oxford branding wall are S.T.A.R.T. leader John Vondracek, real estate developer and consultant; Anne Paine, Image Committee chairperson; and Steve Hosier, operations manager at the volunteer theater.

Photo Oxford Standard

Neligh Opens State's First Community Resource Center, Plans Dedication April 19

Community and state activist **Merv Jacobsen** invited a few Neligh residents to breakfast a few months back to discuss the community's economic patterns and his views that small Nebraska towns "don't need a hand-out, we need a structure." As a result, Neligh adopted the S.T.A.R.T. economic development structure and an expanded group, now identified as IFA (Ideas for Action), continues luncheon meetings every Thursday so that leaders keep up-to-date on activities and progress.

While Jacobsen is concentrating on projects that range from a Highway 14 bridge over the Missouri to bringing Nebraskans back home, Neligh resi-

dents are opening a Community Resource Center to serve the County and setting the stage for a new clinic and other community improvements.

Jody Asmussen, S.T.A.R.T. co-chair, attributes Neligh's progress to "enthusiastic and cooperative" workers.

By the time Neligh held its Town Hall meeting February 6, 1991, only seven months after Day One of the S.T.A.R.T. program, they had the plan and the funds to establish Nebraska's first Community Resource Center.

Located in the former library building, the Resource Center opened February 11 with a part-time director

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Town Hall Meetings Scheduled For March, April

Several S.T.A.R.T. communities will welcome spring with their Town Hall Meetings. Stanton officially introduced its Action Plan on March 15, Syracuse on March 27, and Clarkson on April 4. Gordon will kick off its S.T.A.R.T. initiatives on April 25.

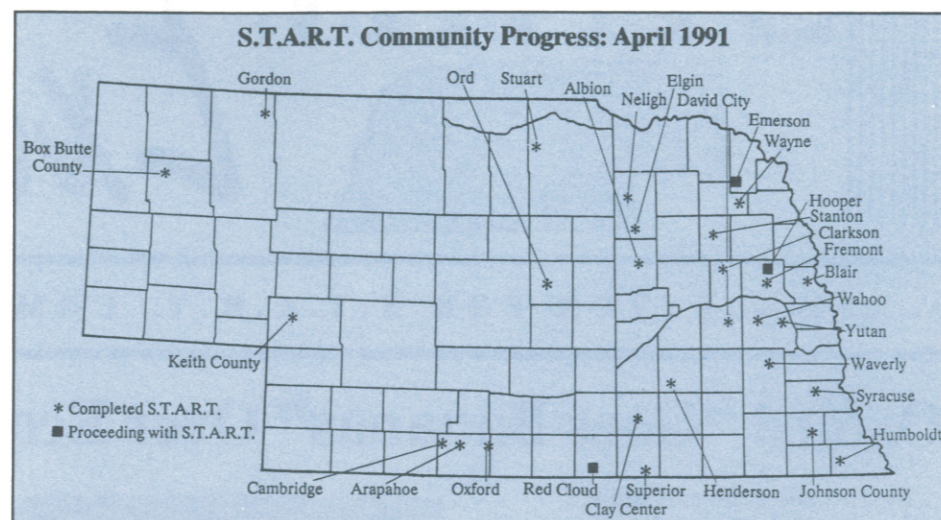
Town hall meetings provide an opportunity for the S.T.A.R.T. Steering Committee to discuss their Action Plan with State resource persons, and present it to the local residents. Field representatives from the Department of Economic Development assist the local S.T.A.R.T. leaders in planning for this important evening. Communities create excitement by making it festive, recruiting new volunteers and having some fun while getting serious about local development.

Western Planner Conference to Offer "What Works"

The Western Planner National Conference will offer 75 presentations and testimonials on what works in the West for community planning during a three-day conference July 31 to August 2, 1991 at the Hilton Hotel in Lincoln.

CPAR and S.T.A.R.T. representatives will present a panel. Keynote speakers include noted author and environmentalist **Ian McHarg**; **Philip Burgess**, president and CEO of the Center for the New West; Nebraska folklorist **Roger Welch**; Nebraska historian **Robert Manley** and others from the 12 Western Planner states.

Those interested from communities are encouraged to attend. Reservations and information may be made by contacting **Joseph Luther**, President, Nebraska Chapter APA at 402-472-3592 or 210 Architecture Hall, College of Architecture, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588-0106.



Oxford Overcomes Economic Drought

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Oxford's future financial stability.

But it might be nostalgia that has turned the town around...and around...and around. The Carousel recreation center looks like the Fifties, and its bow-tied and striped-shirt employees, honky-tonk music and soda fountain have helped to change the town's atmosphere! Developing the nostalgia was a natural for owner **Bob Mitchell**, who came back to his hometown from Colorado.

Vondracek looks to retirees as a community force of the future. He expects many to return to their Nebraska heritage, and one of the projects that awaits them is building a "first class" movie theater. The present theater, "quite a theater in its day," is being maintained by renewed efforts of townspeople, the JayCees and Chamber of Commerce and has become a popular attraction for all ages.

Oxford branded its progressive spirit on a cedar fence that frames a new mini park, a focal point that fills what once was only empty space between two buildings. For "bucks to burn a brand," farmers with legitimate brands and any other donors burned their brands or names on the 30-foot or so wide fence. It turned out to be a "brand new celebration" created by the S.T.A.R.T. Image Committee. Rotary served chili, and high school shop students helped with branding. The branding fence has become a sizzling focus for community recognition.

As a result of community donations, Oxford's golf course and racquetball facility is debt free and an attraction for the surrounding area. It took only a few days recently to retire a \$65,000 debt, with more than \$20,000 pledged during the initial appeals meeting. Donations came later even from non-golfers, sports enthusiasts noted.

Keno, introduced in the community in late 1989, is bringing cars back to Main Street and providing funds for the new theater and other community projects.

Oxford has "gone bananas" over economic development. The image started with an aggressive sales campaign by **Gene Brooks** of the Brooks Ford Agency: "Come on down to Oxford, the Banana Belt." (After all, Oxford is south of Lexington, Grand Island and North Platte.) The slogan peeled off a bunch of results: Oxford is referred to as "Banana City," they held a "banana split" day; about two dozen businesses exhibit imported banana trees (brought inside to survive the winter) and there is a contest for growing the biggest bananas. That may take a few years since the trees grow slowly, but that will give the town time to answer all the inquiries from California and the nation.

Community & Economic Development I · D · E · A · S

♦ Surveys of 19 Communities Reveal Statewide Attitudes

Findings from S.T.A.R.T. surveys conducted in 19 communities have been compiled to show attitudes that exist across the state.

The most poorly rated areas (perhaps the areas of greatest concern) were employment, recreation, housing and the responsiveness by city government and local development groups to the needs of citizens. The numbers in parentheses are the percentage of respondents who rated the items either fair or poor on the S.T.A.R.T. community attitude survey.

Job availability for college graduates (72 percent) and high school graduates (67 percent) received the lowest marks. Availability of full-time jobs (66 percent), student summer work (59 percent) and part-time jobs (57 percent) also received low ratings. Overall job quality (66 percent) and job availability (64 percent) also rated low.

Recreation for teenagers fared poorly with 50 percent of respondents rating it fair/poor. Programs for other age groups were rated higher: adults (38 percent), seniors (32 percent) and young children (29 percent).

Rental housing supply received the lowest ratings for housing (40 percent rating it fair/poor), while housing for purchase received 23 percent fair/poor ratings. Almost one third of respondents rated fair/poor the mobile home parks (31 percent) and housing for low-income (30 percent).

♦ Child Care Survey

Seventy-two percent of Nebraska youngsters under age 6 are in regular child care, compared to the national average of 62 percent, according to a survey conducted by CPAR research consultant **Patricia Funk**. Dr. Funk used findings from the *Nebraska Preschool Child Care: 1990* survey to provide testimony in February to the Health and Human Services Committee of the State Legislature in support of LB836, the Quality Child Care Act.

Over one third of respondents rated as fair/poor the responsiveness of their local development group (36 percent) and city government (35 percent).

What did communities like about themselves? These received a response of fewer than 20 percent for a fair/poor rating: fire protection (2 percent), ambulance (3 percent), library (10 percent), garbage service (10 percent), nursing home (13 percent), hospital (16 percent), appearance of residential (16 percent) and downtown business areas (18 percent), and Chamber of Commerce (19 percent).

People in S.T.A.R.T. communities showed enthusiasm for working for their communities. Thirty-nine percent said they would work as volunteers, and 66 percent said they would attend a Town Hall meeting to learn about the S.T.A.R.T. action plan.

When asked about the kinds of development strategies they would pursue, those receiving the most support were: helping existing business/industry (92 percent said yes); attracting new industry (89 percent), attracting new retail (84 percent) and attracting new service business (77 percent). Attracting tourism received 56 percent affirmative answers.

♦ Entering The Global Marketplace

International business no longer is an interest of only corporate giants as more small and medium-sized businesses are entering the global market. The U.S. economy is becoming a "world economy," and if the United States is to address the issues of the trade deficit, then the public sector, small and large businesses, economic development organizations, professionals and educational institutions must pool their expertise.

With these new opportunities for exportation, small and medium-sized businesses must have a stronger understanding of the international market place. A focused world trade effort also will bring positive public relations for the communities as foreign investment increases in the United States.

These are some steps to form a better understanding of the global market:

- **Know Your Community Businesses.** It is imperative to know what types of manufacturing, products or services your community has available for the global market.
- **Know the Roadmap of Services Available.** One available source

of information would be the U.S. Foreign and Commercial Services, (USFCS), Omaha District Office, 11133 O Street, Omaha, NE 68137 or 402-221-3664.

- **Know the Language.** Learn the terminology, export strategy, market research, channels of export distribution, export regulations and other issues. An excellent source for this information is the book, *A Basic Guide to Exporting*, available through the U.S. Government Printing Office for \$8.50.
- **Strengthen the Networks.** Educate!!! Many communities across the nation are setting up volunteer educational networks called World Trade Clubs which can help educate the community and the area businesses. In most cases, speakers can be obtained for meetings at no cost.

Source: *Economic Development Review*. McCarthy, R. Michael. "How Your Economic Development Organization Can Enter the Global Marketplace - A Pragmatic Approach." Fall 1989

◆ Employee, Supervisor "Want Lists" Differ

When seeking how to better utilize human resources to improve local business, it may be useful to review recent studies that indicate employees and managers perceive employee motivation differently. Asked to rank the top ten factors that affect employee motivation, employers put good wages first, but their employees listed appreciation most important.

The top four factors on the employees' list were non-monetary. Only one of the top four appeared on both lists and that was job security.

Top Ten Important Factors In A Job

Employees	Supervisors
• Appreciation	• Good wages
• Feeling "in" on things	• Job Security
• Understanding attitude	• Promotion opportunities
• Job security	• Good working conditions
• Good wages	• Interesting work
• Interesting work	• Loyalty from management
• Promotion opportunities	• Tactful discipline
• Loyalty from management	• Appreciation
• Good working conditions	• Understanding attitude
• Tactful discipline	• Feeling "in" on things

Source: *Keeping Pace*. A publication of the Pace Network, Inc.

◆ Conference To Highlight Nebraska Work Force

The importance of Nebraska's work force to its stability and growth will be featured at "Nebraska's Work Force and Community Development Linkages" conference April 22 and 23, 1991, at the Midtown Holiday Inn, Grand Island.

Featured panels will include: Labor Market Characteristics and Trends; Human Resource Development; Underemployment; Employee Recruitment Techniques, Training, and Retention Strategies; and Entrepreneurship. Lt. Governor Maxine Moul is scheduled to speak on the *Comparative Advantages of Nebraska's Work Force*.

CPAR is helping sponsor the conference which costs \$45 for registration, meals and a resource packet. Register by April 15 by calling Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel at (402) 472-8602 or writing 208 Filley Hall, UNL, Lincoln, NE 68583-0922.

◆ Volunteer Retention: "Keep Them Corraled"

Successful community leaders emphasize the investment value of volunteers, and outline effective procedures that retain them as well as "corral" the maverick or independent volunteer in order to benefit from a more productive team:

- Show how important they are to the whole process so they know their work is worthwhile.
- Have jobs available immediately so when training is over they become involved.
- Tune into the individuals; put yourself in their shoes.
- Offer support and direction; empathize.
- Show individual appreciation with a personal thank you and praise.
- Respect their ability to make a decision and follow through on the work assigned.
- When you see the volunteer burning out, find out why and how you might defuse it.
- Involve them or ask their input in decision making.
- Emphasize individuality, thoughtfulness, creativity and respect.

◆ Rural Hospitals Seek New Financial Sources

Many rural hospitals are looking for alternative ways to finance expansions and new long-term care facilities in order to meet the growing demand of long-term health care. Two valid considerations are to offer tax-exempt revenue bonds and forming private ventures.

Rarely used in the past, the revenue bond relieves the frustrations of rejection for loans by banks and savings-and-loan institutions. Some citizens prefer bond issues because they adapt to the needs of long-term care. Receiving revenues from bonds has been beneficial for some rural facilities, but it is more difficult for smaller facilities (30 or fewer beds) to achieve. These smaller hospitals are limited by their size and history of financial problems.

Recently some hospitals have enlisted individuals who are willing to invest their resources in exchange for existing equity or future assets as a return on the investment. One drawback to this is the lengthy time that may be required to find or cultivate an investor who is willing to take the risk.

Source: *Financing Healthcare*. "Rurals using new techniques to finance long-term care." Howard Kim

◆ Interpretive Reports Available On 1990 Census

Communities that consider new directions based on population counts and trends may obtain several interpretive reports on the 1990 population figures which were released recently by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. These reports were

prepared by the Nebraska State Data Center at UNO's Center for Public Affairs Research in Omaha, which also is the parent organization of the S.T.A.R.T. economic development program. To order, call S.T.A.R.T. at 1-800-227-4533.

1. Population Change: 1980 to 1990

Report 1—State, Counties, Cities & Towns Free
1990 and 1980 population, numeric change and percentage change for state and counties only.

2. Population: 1860 to 1990

Report 2A—State & Counties . . \$5.00
Report 2B—Cities & Towns . . \$10.00
Population from each Census since 1860. Shows highest Census year, highest Census year population and 1990 population as a percentage of highest Census year population.

3. Population: 1860 to 1990

Report 3—Cities & Towns . . . \$10.00
Population from every Census since 1860 for cities and towns, sorted alphabetically within counties.

4. Population Rankings: 1990

Report 4A—State & Counties . . \$5.00
Report 4B—Cities & Towns . . \$10.00
Ranks places by 1990 population, numeric change from 1980 and percentage change from 1980.

5. Population: 1860 to 1990

Diskette—Cities & Counties . . \$35.00

Neligh Open's State's First Community Resource Center

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and a full-time assistant director. They had the financial support of the Power Board, City Council, County Board of Supervisors, the Industrial Development Board, First United Bank, GTE North, Inc. (General Telephone) and Kansas-Nebraska Gas.

Volunteers gave 179 hours to paint and clean the building, and office furnishings have been donated by 10 local residents or businesses. Future contributions are anticipated from users in surrounding communities.

In developing the Resource Center, Neligh expanded on a similar system observed in Iowa by project chair **Ronald Mortensen**, pastor of the Church of Christ and president of RAM Enterprises, Inc. "We experienced such favorable response in the first days of operation—helping people with advertising, marketing and export/import information—that we are already running short on hours and staff."

Resource Center Director **Dick Corkle** considers these services an incentive for county-wide use: the Center's confidentiality code and its meeting space and central point of information to serve CORE (Clearwater, Orchard, Royal and Ewing). The services provided by Corkle and Assistant Director **Craig Evert** will be evaluated in one year by the Resource Center Board of Directors.

Northeast Technical College in Norfolk conducts an outreach program with classes in continuing adult education and counseling at the Resource Center, and in a rare move away from its main campus, held its Board of Directors meeting there in March.

Other community improvements are continuing successful cleanup days, hiring a firm to conduct a housing needs assessment, hiring a professional grant writer to accomplish housing goals and developing tourism promotions for Neligh's Old Mill, a future Trail of Tears Park, and a fall dig at Orchard.

More than 60 pages of comments from the community were returned with the S.T.A.R.T. survey, which had a 50 percent response rate. Asmussen



Nebraska's first Community Resource Center...from left, Ron Mortensen, Jodi Asmussen, Craig Evert, Richard Corkle.

Photo Neligh News & Leader

says, "We took them very seriously and established committees accordingly." She credits Neligh's success to community cooperation, the county-wide leadership force of co-leader **Dewey Teel**, the county extension agent, the public support of businesses and the *Neligh News & Leader* newspaper.

Neligh extends an invitation to an Open House April 19, 2 to 4 p.m., to introduce the Resource Center, the first facility of its kind in the state and designed to serve the entire county.

Communicate Your Vision To Obtain Financing For Economic Development

by **Darryl J. Peterson** Clay Center S.T.A.R.T. Leader

Some people would like to consider obtaining financing for business and economic development more of an art than a science. In reality, it is neither. It is the ability to communicate your vision, balanced by hard work, careful analysis and belief in your final outcome.

The key to successful financing is balance—finding the place where financing meets reality. The reality is paying the debt back and being able to do so in good or bad times. Careful analysis must be done to determine the projects that meet this fine line. By not doing careful analysis, you risk rejecting worthwhile projects or financing projects into bankruptcy.

The key then to obtain financing for economic development is careful analysis, which includes:

- determining overall profitability of the industry involved;
- determining prospects for demand and ability to supply by the business being considered;
- character of the individual as relates to experience, honesty, business sense, common sense and overall vision for business;

- determining profitability of the business after looking at the above, imagining the average and worse scenario that could exist to order to assure repayment of debt.

Once you firmly believe in your project and, most importantly, share your vision, you can obtain financing. It will take countless conversations and time in communicating with different agencies and people. Communicate your vision and have a broad base of knowledge concerning the help and programs available.

Darryl J. Peterson
Assistant Vice President
Commercial State Bank

Editor's Note: Articles from our readers will be printed periodically in S.T.A.R.T. Exchange. We reserve the right to edit for clarity or space restrictions. Insights on your community's experiences may be submitted to Alice Schumaker, S.T.A.R.T. manager, at the Omaha location above your mailing address.

New Director Sees S.T.A.R.T. As "Primary Role" For Nebraska's Future Economic Development

"Nebraska communities seem to have a unique capacity to work together," observes **Steve Buttress**, Nebraska's new Director of the Department of Economic Development.

This cooperation within and between communities is the "key element" that Buttress believes will lead Nebraska communities to become accomplished. "It is a characteristic." Buttress speculates, "that Nebraskans learned through history, realizing that to 'get here, survive here and prosper here' you had to defy that individualistic approach."

This spirit of cooperation is a quality Buttress finds only in Nebraska. He previously put it to good use as S.T.A.R.T. facilitator for the Superior and the Elgin communities and earlier as president of the Buffalo County Nebraska Economic Development Corporation in Kearney. At the time of his appointment February 1 by Governor Nelson, he was vice president of college relations at Kearney State College.

Tempered by enthusiasm and fun, Buttress cites two goals: "recognition that development begins locally and makes things happen, and secondly, that service providers operate as a team to assess the organization, avoid duplication and use available resources in the most effective fashion."

Eventually he hopes to form a system of regional service providers who would be in touch with issues and



Steve Buttress, Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. "The Department of Economic Development is committed to supporting the visions that are seen through the S.T.A.R.T. process. This service plays a 'primary role' in Nebraska's future."

problems. "This model is already emerging in some parts of the state."

In the year since Buttress was involved as a S.T.A.R.T. facilitator, he saw an "absolutely incredible change" in Superior and Elgin.

"Once Superior identified its common goals and recognized what a community could do, there was an outpouring of public energy, enthusiasm and excitement."

"The same was true for Elgin. Once Elgin began the S.T.A.R.T. process, the town renewed itself through the strategic planning process."

A native of Columbus, Ohio, Buttress held research and community development positions in Montana

and Ohio before coming to Nebraska about five years ago. His wife, Tena, is a Registered Nurse, operates a parent education consulting firm and, as a licensed trainer associated with the American Red Cross, trains health professionals statewide on AIDS education and policy.

They have four children. Amanda is a senior law student at Carleton (MN) College, and Abby is a freshman at Iowa State College where she is on the gymnastic team and is majoring in health and fitness sciences. Adam is a sophomore at Kearney High School, and Amelia is in the eighth grade at Horizon Middle School, Kearney.

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In Your S.T.A.R.T. Exchange

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- IDEAS provides guidelines.

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